

SENATE—Wednesday, March 2, 2005

The Senate met at 9:15 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SAM BROWNBACk, a Senator from the State of Kansas.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, the Author of peace and lover of concord, we thank You for Your goodness and loving kindness. We praise You for our creation, preservation, and all of the blessings of this life.

Guide and govern the Members of this body by Your Holy Spirit. In the heat of their work help them not to forget You but to remember that Your power is available for every challenge. Teach them how to serve You as they should. Help them not to strive primarily for success but for faithfulness.

Strengthen each of us for the challenges of today and tomorrow. Enable us to so live that people will see Your image and glorify Your name. Bless our military as it labors for liberty. We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SAM BROWNBACk led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 2, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SAM BROWNBACk, a Senator from the State of Kansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWNBACk thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning following morning business we will resume consideration of bankruptcy reform. Under an order from last night, shortly after resuming the bill we will proceed to two stacked rollcall votes on amendments. The first vote will be on the Feingold homestead amendment, which will be followed by a vote on the Akaka disclosure amendment. The first vote will, therefore, occur approximately at 10:30 this morning, maybe just a little bit later.

For the remainder of the day we will continue working through amendments to the bill. Senators should expect rollcall votes throughout the day. One of the reasons we scheduled the votes early is to get started to build momentum throughout the course of the day. We made great progress on the bill yesterday. I thank all of our colleagues for coming forward with their amendments.

We are systematically addressing each of the amendments, and we will continue to do so over the course of the day and the remainder of this week.

ACCESS TO SAFE WATER AND SANITATION

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to legislation that will be introduced by myself and others later today that focuses on an issue which has for too long been neglected, not just by our people or our Government but, indeed, peoples around the world. It centers on the issue of access to safe water and sanitation. This legislation focuses on developing countries with specific policies outlined in the legislation. I am pleased we have Members on both sides of the aisle joining me as original cosponsors of this legislation which will be introduced later today.

It boils down to the simple fact that every 15 seconds, a child dies because of a disease contracted from unclean water. Four children have died since I began talking on this particular issue.

Fully 90 percent of infant deaths, of deaths of children less than 5 years of age, relate to waterborne illnesses, a product of lack of access to clean water or inadequate sanitation. In total, water-related illnesses kill 14,000 people a day, and most of them are children. That is over 5 million people a year. It does not include the other millions of individuals who will be debilitated and prevented from living healthy lives.

Globally, in many ways, waterborne disease is a silent tsunami. That is the

impact it has on a continuing basis. Now is the time to focus on it. Now is the time to act because these are preventable deaths. Typhoid, cholera, dysentery, dengue fever, trachoma, intestinal helminth infection, and schistosomiasis can all be prevented by simply providing safe water and sanitation. More than 1.1 billion people today lack access to clean water. They do not have access to what we take for granted. We can go to the water faucets and drink water in most parts of this country, but lack of access to that clean water is killing a child every 15 seconds. Malaria, which is a mosquito-borne disease directly linked with stagnant pools of water, kills 1 million people each year. Again, most of those are young children. It is preventable.

Unfortunately, reliable projections suggest that the problem is bad, but projections are that it is getting worse. We know it is getting worse. Water stress and water scarcity, leading to disease-borne and impure water, is increasing. If we look forward to 2025, upwards of two-thirds of the world's population may be subject to water stress.

There are over 260 river basins across the world that are shared by two or more countries that actually share the water basins. There are 13 basins that flow through 5 or more countries. There, water is scarce where it is shared by so many. Yet it is so necessary that scarcity can, historically, result in armed conflict. Clean water seems so simple. It seems so basic. In America, we, for the most part, take it for granted. The rest of the world cannot.

UNICEF reports that over half of the world's schools lack safe water and sanitation. In many parts of the world, including in Africa where I have the opportunity to visit, people travel not just an hour but 3 and 4 hours to provide water on a daily basis for their family. In many ways, it becomes a women's issue globally because in most countries that burden falls upon women who are pulled away from addressing other issues such as their children and family. It takes time going to that water source and carrying it home.

Imagine living in a rural village in Sub-Saharan Africa or East Asia where village members share their water with livestock, where you have contamination occurring on an ongoing basis. Imagine being a grandmother like Mihiret G-Maryam from a small village in Ethiopia who watched five of her grandchildren between the ages of 3 and 8 die from water-related diseases. Before the U.K.-based WaterAid organization intervened in her community,

constant stomach pain and diarrhea were a fact of life, an accepted fact of life. The foul-smelling contaminated water exposed Mihiret and her neighbors to parasitic diseases. They had no latrines. Human waste, human excretions were everywhere.

As Mihiret testifies:

It was horrid to see, as well as being unhealthy.

Now, because of the education and investment of WaterAid, together with the local church, her village is clean, and people no longer have to suffer from that chronic stomach ache, pain, and diarrhea. Clean water has literally saved lives. This story demonstrates that proper management and intervention can be a currency for peace and international cooperation.

On my medical missions, I have seen this on a daily basis. Most recently, in January, a bipartisan group of Senators went to East Asia to serve in the aftermath of the December 26 tsunami. As I have mentioned in the Senate, traveling over the Sri Lanka coast for hundreds and hundreds of miles, we could see that devastation was non-stop. We saw the destruction of local water sources, water buckets washed away, and the contamination of wells with saltwater.

We know the statistics: Well over 150,000 people died, and a million lost their homes. Many are still missing as of today. Thousands of children will grow up without their parents. It will take a lot of time and, yes, a lot of resources to rebuild that infrastructure. A lot of people will never recover from the psychological shock, and the scale of the tragedy is difficult to comprehend.

I mention that because if you look at what happened in the tsunami, it illustrates what can happen when one focuses aggressively on relief with clean water. The tsunami poisoned wells, and the routine dependence on water was taken away. That lack of access to clean water introduced the potential for dysentery, for cholera, and for malaria.

As we flew over the coast we could look out the window and see stagnant pools of water that, if left, will become a source of breeding for the mosquitos that ultimately could have led to a malaria epidemic. Those things did not happen because of the rapid relief addressing clean water and sanitation. We participated in these relief efforts. Many participated in some way.

What is critical to understand in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami is that there are long-term solutions to the problem surrounding water which we in this body and our Government have not yet addressed. But when you have a child dying every 15 seconds from a preventable cause—that is, lack of access to clean water—there are things we can do to focus and, hopefully, prevent thousands and thousands of deaths that occur now every week.

March 22nd is designated by the U.N. General Assembly Resolution 58/217 World Water Day and will launch the International Decade For Action. That will launch an initiative called Water for Life. For the decade ahead—that is the next 10 years—from 2005 to 2015, the United States has agreed to work to reduce by one-half “the proportion of people who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water along with access to basic sanitation.”

The President and the administration have taken steps to fulfill these commitments. In August 2002, the Water for the Poor Initiative was launched with the intent to improve sustainable management of fresh water resources in over 70 developing countries. An estimated \$750 million was invested in this initiative in 2004.

However, in a time of limited public resources, we find that in that year only a little over 6 percent, or about a 20th of total U.S. foreign assistance funding for water activities, was targeted for sub-Saharan Africa. Yet it is in sub-Saharan Africa that the major problem, for the most part, rests. It is an allocation of resources that we need to examine to see if it is appropriate instead of investing where the problem is. If the objective is to save lives, the allocation of our resources seems to be going to other areas. Sub-Saharan Africa is not only where we have the greatest problem today, but it has the fastest growing population. Thus, they will have some of the greatest need for clean water and sanitation in the future.

As we look at the legislation we will be introducing, we all recognize there is no single piece of legislation that can fully address this huge challenge before us to eliminate these water-related diseases around the world. But I do think this legislation underscores the importance, in a bipartisan way, of continued leadership in this arena of addressing a problem that has been hidden from the world for too long. Alongside Government leadership, many dedicated organizations, private individuals, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, and international governmental organizations are working hard, each in their own ways, to address this challenge.

The bipartisan legislation we are introducing today has three simple objectives.

No. 1, it would make it clear that we would have an unequivocal pronouncement that clean, safe water and sanitation, sound water management, and improved hygiene for people around the world is a major policy goal of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. It becomes a major policy goal. It is not today, but it should be. And with this legislation it will be.

Second, it would authorize a 5-year pilot program of \$250 million a year to assist those countries that have the

highest rates of waterborne diseases. This is what it does: It helps them develop funding mechanisms such as investment insurance, investment guarantees, or loan guarantees of up to 75 percent to develop sustainable—the key word is “sustainable”—water infrastructure systems.

Third, the legislation directs the Secretary of State, along with the Administrator of the USAID, to develop within 180 days a national strategy that would both assess what is being done today and what changes need to be made in order to expand access to safe water and sanitation. This national strategy would be produced in consultation with all of the Federal agencies addressing components of this problem today, along with appropriate international organizations, foreign countries, and U.S. nongovernmental associations and entities.

I will close with mentioning this, as well: In the weeks ahead, I will introduce companion legislation to create a global health corps that will be using the Peace Corps as a model and inspiration. It will allow teams of medical professionals and other volunteers to travel to remote areas to provide medical treatment and public health information. Some of these teams will provide quick assistance when disaster strikes. Some will provide ongoing care in some of the neediest parts of the world. And many of these health volunteers would come from the ranks of experienced doctors, nurses, and medical technicians.

We know that such public health and medical assistance can serve as a currency of peace and a vital tool of public diplomacy. Our assistance to other nations carries the most weight when it involves that personal and intimate contact at the community level, and where it also provides tangible benefits to everyday people. Medical and public health assistance does both of these things. Thus, it can be used as a currency of peace and a vital tool of public diplomacy.

I look forward to the Foreign Relations Committee reporting this legislation in the near future, and I look forward to enacting this legislation expeditiously. Remember, every 15 seconds a child dies somewhere in the world from a waterborne illness because of a lack of access to clean water.

In the short time I have given this statement on the Senate floor, another 50 children have died from diseases we know how to prevent. We must do our part to bring health and hope to the millions of people who need clean water. It is as simple as the glass of water that sits on my desk.

I do thank the Democratic leader. We have been talking and working together on this legislation. I believe this can represent a tremendous bipartisan, ultimately bicameral effort that can reverse a human tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes as a product, at

least in part, because of inadequate attention.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, these 50 children who have died during the presentation by the majority leader are children, of course, who have parents, and brothers and sisters in most instances. The grief and heartache is multiplied each day with the death of children. I appreciate very much the majority leader reaching out to make sure this is a bipartisan piece of legislation. I think it sets a good tone that the two leaders are moving forward on an initiative that speaks of the goodness of America. That is what this is all about. We care about children dying, wherever it happens.

We have the unique situation in this Senate that we have one of the leaders, the Republican leader, who is a medical doctor. During his tenure in the Senate, he has traveled the world looking at medical problems that exist and there is no bigger problem than water.

Our former colleague who recently passed away, Paul Simon from Illinois, wrote a book, "Tapped Out." In that book, he mentioned some of the things I have said. The State of Nevada is different from the State of Tennessee. We have what we call rivers, but they are tiny, little. I do not know what they would be called in most States.

The Colorado River is a river that at times can be a mighty river, but the rest of the rivers we have in Nevada are tiny, little rivers. The Truckee River, which supplies the second largest city in Nevada, Reno, with all its water, is a little stream. You can walk across it in most places. The world-famous city of Las Vegas gets 4 inches of rain every year.

We need to do something about the lack of water around the country, and not only the lack of water but the quality of the water. A lot of places have water, but it is not water you can drink and stay healthy with.

I am pleased to join the majority leader in cosponsoring this important legislation. We are going to introduce it later today. Our staffs are working on the language.

With this legislation, we are seeking to do something meaningful for the hundreds of millions of people across the globe who lack safe and clean water. It is something so basic, yet so critical to human life. Improving the delivery and access of clean and safe water, better hygiene and medicine, that is what this bill seeks to achieve.

No one knows more in this body than the majority leader, from his travels in Africa and elsewhere, that over a billion people—and that is probably a figure that is too low—lack access to clean water. Each year, as has been indicated, millions of people die. We do

not know how many people, but at least 5 million people die from water-related diseases. More people die from unsafe water than from all forms of violence, including war. Eighty percent of all sickness in the world is attributable to unsafe water and improper sanitation, and they go together in most instances.

These statistics are staggering and disturbing because so much of this disease and despair is preventable. That is what the legislation is all about. We need greater U.S. and international involvement and a more proactive strategy. In addition, we need to fully fund this initiative and the other water programs currently undertaken by our Government.

I am grateful the majority leader will shortly enter into a colloquy with me that directly addresses the strategy and funding problems. We are going to work together. This is bipartisan legislation. The majority leader and I are doing this not for purposes of showing we can do something together, which I think is an important message, but we are actually going to do something. We are going to do more than introduce this legislation. There is going to be more than authorizing legislation. We have a huge budget in the United States. I think we can find money to actually do this. It is important. And we do not have to take from other programs. I hope that is the case.

So I look forward to continuing to work with the majority leader, Senator LEAHY, and Senator MCCONNELL, who are the ranking member and chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, and, of course, Senators LUGAR and BIDEN, who are the chair and ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee. There are others. But we are going to get working to make sure we do something positive to make sure the world is a safer place.

When people are healthy, they have less problems with raising their children properly. It creates all across the world an influence that is positive and resolves many differences. We know, as is pointed out in the book by Senator Simon, in the future, wars are going to be fought over water, not over territorial boundaries necessarily, unless it does involve water. There is a shortage of water.

If we can do some good work in the Middle East, for example, with water—and here, I have to compliment Israel. Israel, as we speak, does not have the best relations with some of its neighbors, but they have joint water projects that they are working on. There is not a lot of fanfare for that, but they all realize that water is important, as we do.

So again, I compliment and I applaud the majority leader for his initiative. I look forward with anticipation to doing something good for millions and

even billions of people around the world.

Mr. FRIST. I am pleased to enter into this colloquy with the distinguished minority leader and I appreciate his cosponsorship of the Currency for Peace Act of 2005.

Mr. REID. I am grateful to the majority leader for raising the critical issue of the lack of safe water in developing countries. It is one of the world's most pressing development challenges which impacts hundreds of millions of people across the globe.

Mr. FRIST. Unsafe water and water-related diseases have far reaching consequences. That is why U.S. Government, acting through the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development, has been undertaking critically important programs in developing countries to provide clean and safe water, sanitation and hygiene for many years. These life-saving programs should be continued and expanded, wherever possible.

Mr. REID. It is also critical for the United States and the international community to fully recognize the role that unsafe water plays in causing death, disease, poverty, environmental degradation, and instability. An aggressive and timely response is required, and the United States should be at the forefront of that effort. The U.S. Government and other donor nations must develop a more proactive response that commits greater resources and ensures that these resources are allocated where the greatest needs exist.

Mr. FRIST. And while we bolster and enhance our existing programs and strategies, Senator REID and I are pleased to put forward this new initiative that fully acknowledges the role that safe water plays in health and development. In the future, we must find the additional resources to fully fund the Safe Water Act of 2005, without decreasing our support for existing safe water and other foreign assistance programs.

Mr. REID. I fully agree that the initiatives set forth in this act should be fully funded, but not with funds taken from existing and ongoing foreign assistance programs. I look forward to working with Senator FRIST and the White House to obtain full funding for this program in the President's fiscal year 2007 budget and in subsequent years so the United States can implement pilot programs that can eventually be expanded to other countries in the future.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there